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John William Graham: From Farmer to Soldier

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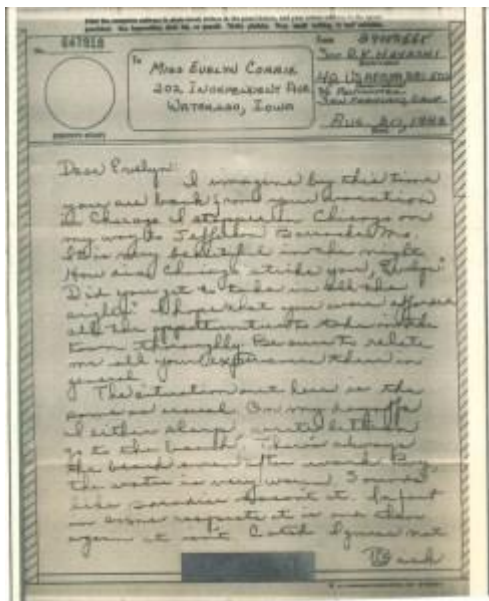
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A Letter to Miss Evelyn Corrie

Rhetorical Analysis:

I'm analyzing a letter written by Sergeant R. K. Hayashi on August 30, 1943 to Evelyn Corrie, shown in Figure 1. The letter is divided into two main paragraphs. In the first paragraph, Dick (Richard Hayashi) asks Evelyn about her recent vacation to Chicago and wants her to tell him all about her trip in her next letter. He



mentions that he passed through Chicago on his way to the Jefferson Barracks Military Post in Missouri. The second paragraph consists of Dick telling Evelyn about the military base he resides at. Based on the return address, he's at USAFISPA headquarters in San Francisco, in other words the United States Army Forces in the South Pacific Area. Dick tells Evelyn about the beach and nice weather in San Francisco.

Figure 1: the letter

I think there are a few purposes to this letter that Dick fully intended. Since I discovered that Evelyn eventually went to the University of Chicago and became the Youth Director at the First Methodist Church in Chicago, it's possible that rather than going on vacation Evelyn actually went to Chicago for a college visit of sorts. If that was the case and Dick knew about her reasons for going to Chicago, then perhaps he was trying to ask her discretely if she intended to move to Chicago or not. From the affectionate language in the letter, I would infer that Dick hoped that she wasn't

interested in Chicago, so that she would not be further away than she already was from him. If Evelyn wrote back to him saying that she hated the city, then he could assume that she wouldn't want to move there, and the reverse would be true if she wrote that she loved it.

It's possible that, by talking about the nice weather, Dick had intended to entice Evelyn to visit him. On the other hand, perhaps he wanted to give Evelyn the impression that he was enjoying himself on the beach in order to distract her from the fact that he was at an army base. I'm more inclined to believe the latter, because the letter gives off the impression that Dick cares about Evelyn. Also, given the context of the time, perhaps Dick wished to create an illusion for himself as well, and think about something other than the war. If that was the case, then he is utilizing comfort, and perhaps pathos, to put her and himself at ease, and to convince her that there was nothing to be worried about (Heinrichs, p. 44). Initially, I thought Dick and Evelyn were romantically involved with each other. However, I discovered that 3 years after this letter was written, she married her "high school sweetheart" Robert Birkby. A phone conversation with Evelyn also revealed that they were close friends.



Figure 2: San Francisco Port of Embarkation

Historical Analysis:

The letter was written in 1943, clearly during World War II while Franklin D. Roosevelt was still the president. By this time, the US was actively involved in the war, joining the Allies. The US was sending troops overseas to the fighting and provided supplies to the Allies from such bases as the one which Dick Hayashi was stationed at. The [USAFISPA](#) (United States Army Force in the South Pacific Area) headquarters in San Francisco, also called the Port of Embarkation shown in Figure 2, was primarily dedicated to providing supplies to the army forces. However, it is unclear what exactly the troops at the headquarters would do, especially with the lack of context from the letter.



Figure 3: Jefferson Barracks Military Post

Dick Hayashi mentions that he spent some length of time, unknown to me, at the [Jefferson Barracks Military Post](#) in Missouri (shown in Figure 3). During WWII the post was a significant “reception center for US troops being drafted into the military.” It was an important training site for the army, and later became the first Army Air Corps training site. At its largest during the war, the barracks could hold 1,500 enlisted troops at one time. The barracks was decommissioned as a military post in 1946 after the war. It can be inferred that Dick went to the Jefferson Barracks when he was first drafted into the army (perhaps in 1941 or 1942 when the US declared war on Japan). Dick Hayashi was a Japanese-American

with dual citizenship until 1941 when he renounced his Japanese citizenship. In the summer of 1941 he reported to the Induction Station in Sacramento, was sent to the Presidio in Monterey, went to Camp Roberts for basic training, and ended up in Fort Lewis, Washington when Pearl Harbor was attacked. After this event, all Japanese American soldiers were demoted, regardless of rank, to private. It was in 1942, after being sent to Camp Crowder, MO, that Dick was promoted to Sergeant. He had to take classes at Military Intelligence Service Language School in order to report to Camp Savage in Minnesota (during which time he had met Evelyn). By this time, unsurprisingly, Dick's family had been moved into an internment camp in Arkansas. Aware of this, Evelyn made herself available as a close friend for Dick to confide in during the hard times of war and family struggles. She had met Dick during her two week stay in Minneapolis, and they became friends very quickly.



Figure 4: Evelyn Corrie Birkby

*Figure 5: Dick Hayashi and his wife
Betty Hisako Hayashi*



As it is mentioned in the letter, Evelyn (shown in Figure 4 above) had been on vacation in Chicago while the letter was written, because it says “I imagine by this time you are back from your vacation in Chicago.” At some point in her life, she attended the University of Chicago and worked as a Youth Director for the First Methodist Church in the city. While the date of her graduation from the university and her employment at the church are unknown, it can be inferred that she was visiting Chicago for either a campus visit and/or registration, or perhaps a meeting with the church administrator to inquire about the job. Evelyn had a few people at the time whom she wrote letters to, most of them men in the military. She felt that giving these scared men someone to talk to and confide in gave them hope.

Written By: Evie Whitnell

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